United Nations S/PV.4478 (Resumption 1)

Security Council

Fifty-seventh year

Provisional

4478th meeting

Wednesday, 27 February 2002, 6 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Aguilar Zinser	(Mexico)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Yakimov
	Cameroon	Mr. Tchatchouwo
	China	Mr. Wang Donghua
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Doutriaux
	Guinea	Mr. Mamadouba Camara
	Ireland	Mr. Corr
	Mauritius	Mr. Latona
	Norway	Mr. Dammen
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Singapore	Ms. Foo
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Harrison
	United States of America	Mr. Rosenblatt

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian Question

Letter dated 20 February 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Yemen to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/184)

Identical letters dated 20 February 2002 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council (S/2002/182)

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the *Official Records of the Security Council*. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room C-178.

02-26417 (E)

The meeting resumed at 6.15 p.m.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of the Sudan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the discussion of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Manis (Sudan) took the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Malaysia. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation commends you for convening this meeting of the Security Council in response to the request of the Chairman of the Arab Group to consider the current, very grave situation in Palestine.

Since the Council last debated this issue, the situation has further deteriorated. The violence there is threatening to spiral out of control. To date, more than 1,200 people have died since September 2000, more than 1,000 of them Palestinians. Clearly, with the certainty of more deaths and injuries in the coming weeks and months, the situation cannot be allowed to continue. It is high time for the Council to take decisive action to immediately ease the tension, de-escalate and end the violence, restore calm and provide a basis for constructive dialogue between the conflicting parties, which remains the only viable approach towards a lasting solution to the problem.

Malaysia strongly believes in the Council's responsibility with regard to the maintenance of international peace and security. We reject the argument advanced by some quarters that the United Nations, and the Council in particular, have no role whatsoever in intervening on this issue. Because of this, the Council has over the years been effectively sidelined and prevented from playing its legitimate role in the search for peace in the Middle East. If the Council cannot intervene at this critical time, when, one may ask, will it be allowed to fulfil its responsibility?

My delegation welcomes the decision of the Council to discuss the situation in Palestine on a regular basis. This represents a positive change in the way it deals with the issue. However, it is not enough for the Council merely to consider the situation in its informal consultations, or even in this Chamber, and then fail to take decisive action to end the violence and assist in the search for a final resolution of the conflict. Council members should have realized by now that it is not enough for the Council to periodically express its concern about the situation in that troubled land and then quickly turn its attention away from the problem, in the hope and on the assumption that it is for the parties themselves to resolve the conflict.

Clearly, as the tragic events have borne out, that hope is misplaced and that assumption fallacious. To continue with this line of approach would be to continue to ignore the situation indefinitely, with all the consequent risks to international peace and security. Continued inaction by the Council is tantamount to continuing to appease the occupying Power, which can only deepen the sense of frustration, hopelessness and despair of the Palestinian people and aggravate the situation even further. It would also further undermine the credibility and prestige of the Council.

Last week, when the Secretary-General addressed the Council, he had chosen his words very carefully, but he did not fail to describe the situation on the ground as grim. He justifiably raised the alarm when he said that we were nearing the edge of the abyss and that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict risked sliding towards full-fledged war. Malaysia and others had voiced similar warnings of that grim possibility since the beginning of the intifada.

The Secretary-General's warning must be heeded. Indeed, the entirety of his message to the Council, based on a sound analysis of the problem, must be given the attention it deserves. We agree with him that the issue of security, while important in itself, cannot be dealt with in isolation. It must be seen in a context, and that context remains the continued Israeli occupation and the illegal and unabated expansion of Jewish settlements on Arab lands. Clearly, the Secretary-General recognized that, given the deep mistrust between the two sides, the Palestinians and the

Israelis will not be able to find a solution to the problem, and there is an urgent need for a "third party role", as he put it. The situation demands the intervention of the international community, including the Council.

As the Council grapples with this issue in the context of its own responsibility, we would encourage the Secretary-General and his Special Coordinator, Mr. Terje Roed-Larsen, to intensify their efforts and consultations with the parties as well as with other important international actors who can and are prepared to make a difference in the situation. In this regard, the ideas being promoted by Saudi Arabia, as reported in the news media, constitute an important and welcome contribution by an influential regional actor. It deserves the serious attention of the international community in the overall context of finding a comprehensive settlement of the Palestinian Middle East issue.

My delegation strongly rejects the approach of apportioning blame to and placing demands solely upon President Arafat while ignoring or condoning the provocative policies of Prime Minister Sharon. We condemn all forms of violence, including the violence perpetrated by the military and other security forces of the occupying Power, which involves, inter alia, house demolitions, closures of Palestinian National Authority institutions and other facilities, confiscation and/or destruction of lands and property, torture of detainees, extrajudicial killings of targeted Palestinians, which are on the increase, and continued illegal expansion of Jewish settlement activities in the occupied territories, including Al-Quds al-Sharif.

All of these must be put to an end immediately; they must not be allowed to continue with impunity. The international community must act to ensure that the Palestinian people will no longer endure the grievous violations of their rights and the other indignities to which they have been subjected. Their leader, President Yasser Arafat, must be allowed complete freedom of movement.

Malaysia continues to believe that the United Nations can intervene effectively by dispatching a United Nations mission which would monitor the situation, ease the tension and maintain peace and security on the ground. More or less similar proposals involving the establishment of a United Nations or other international presence to monitor the situation have been tabled for Council consideration. Regrettably, all of these proposals have met with opposition in the Council. We are convinced that if any had been acted upon, the situation in Palestine today would have been vastly different.

We understand that in recent days, an idea was floated concerning the dispatch of a Council fact-finding mission to the area. Unfortunately, it has not been formally presented to the Council because of a lack of necessary support from certain important quarters. We would urge the Council not to abandon this laudable and technically feasible idea. We hope that through further consultations, the necessary political will will be found to authorize such a mission, in the same way as the Council has sent missions to a number of conflict areas. Surely, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territory deserves the same, if not greater, attention from the Council as conflict situations in other parts of the world.

We believe that the Council should use its tremendous prestige and political clout to influence the situation, as it has done in other conflict areas. The world will surely be waiting to see whether, in the face of the grim situation on the ground, the Council will be able to muster the necessary political will to do what needs to be done or will once again fail to rise to the challenge.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Dauth (Australia): Thank you, Mr. President, for convening this timely and important meeting on an issue of deep interest to Member States. Let me add my congratulations to you personally on the professional way in which you have led a difficult debate, particularly so early in your tenure of office in New York.

Like the Secretary-General, the Australian Government was deeply alarmed by the escalation in violence last week between the Israelis and the Palestinians, and the resulting heavy death toll. At the highest levels in our Government, we have repeatedly called for an immediate end to the violence and an early and effective resumption of negotiations. The importance of calls like ours does not diminish. There is no military solution to the situation between the Israelis and the Palestinians and there is no real

alternative to a negotiated settlement. Australia condemns all acts of terrorism. Aimed at innocent civilians, terrorism is morally reprehensible, undermines peace and is tragically futile. It will never solve the differences between Israelis and Palestinians.

Australia has consistently expressed its support for efforts to build peace in the region. As we stated as recently as November last year in our statement in the general debate to the General Assembly, we remain committed to a negotiated settlement based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. We remain — and we will say this as often as we need to and for as long as necessary — strongly committed to the territorial integrity of Israel and the right of the people of Israel to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats or acts of force, as affirmed in resolution 242 (1967). We are, of course, equally committed to the application of this principle to all States in the region.

Australia has consistently recognized the proper right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. We expect that a comprehensive, just and durable resolution of the region's conflict necessarily will meet the legitimate aspiration of the Palestinians to a homeland of their own, in accordance with the principles of resolution 242 (1967).

While a cessation of the violence is paramount, the international community should not lose sight of the importance of other issues identified by the Secretary-General. We recognize the heavy burden that the closures and movement restrictions have placed on the Palestinian people. An alleviation of these circumstances is essential to assisting peace and economic prosperity in the region.

The international community can give political support to rebuilding confidence, but it is at least equally important that it remain committed to a long-term process of economic assistance. It is vital that the people most affected by violence see the benefits that would come from an end to violence and a return to economic development and the prospect of a better life.

Australia has a long-standing programme to provide development assistance, in coordination with other donor countries, to support the social and economic advancement of the Palestinian people in the West Bank and Gaza in areas where we have expertise, such as agriculture, health and education, as well as assistance to build the Palestinian Authority's legal, agricultural and vocational training capacity. This assistance is designed to deliver tangible benefits to those most in need.

Australia has consistently supported international efforts to achieve peace and security and we will continue to do so. In this respect, let me add that, like others, we are encouraged by the reports of new thinking attributed to Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. However, violence must be halted and lead to a durable ceasefire in order to rebuild the confidence necessary for a return to negotiations. International efforts must be directed at assisting building the confidence of both sides.

The present situation is difficult, but we do have a viable set of principles to guide the parties back to the path of a negotiated peace. The recommendations of the Mitchell report and of the Tenet plan are the vital and necessary steps to end the current violence. The Australian Government urges the unconditional resumption of security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and urges both sides to exert full and complete efforts to implement all the recommendations of the Mitchell report.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Australia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Chile. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Valdés (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): As this is the first time that I am speaking during your presidency, Sir, let me first congratulate you on taking the initiative to organize this open debate on a conflict whose persistence and special implications are a matter of concern to the entire international community.

For that reason, Chile wishes today to add its voice in this Chamber to those that have expressed their deep concern at the dangerous and intolerable situation of violence in Israel, Palestine and the occupied territories and to warn of its grave potential consequences for the region.

My country regrets that, despite the parties' acceptance in earlier negotiations of the principle of peaceful coexistence, dignity and security, for the past 18 months they have once again been locked irresponsibly in a spiral of destruction and death that is

having tragic consequences for the civilian populations of Israel and Palestine.

Chile strongly supports the position enunciated in the recent statement of the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, on the conflict and fully agrees that the main problems to be resolved are the illegal occupation of territory, the need to put a rapid end to the acts of violence and terror and an early solution to the economic hardships of the Palestinian people. In this regard, Chile agrees that the political, security and economic issues are interrelated and should be addressed in a comprehensive manner.

We urge Israel and the Palestinian Authority to make every effort to bring about the immediate cessation of all acts of violence, returning as soon as possible to negotiations under the peace process which the international community has proposed to that end, contained principally in the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan — initiatives that been followed up by neither party.

The situation today, however, requires urgent measures that go beyond the issue of how to implement the Tenet or Mitchell schemes. There is now a dire need for the parties to restore the minimum conditions of mutual respect needed to ensure that the negotiations are held under equal conditions. To that end, therefore, we request the Security Council to make every effort to promote such a rapprochement. The Security Council must fully assume the responsibilities assigned to it by the Charter.

Chile reiterates once again the need for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the principle of land for peace. We also wish to underscore the critical role of the Palestinian Authority, which continues to be the legitimate and indispensable partner for peace and must be fully protected.

My country recognizes the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to an independent, viable and democratic State, as well as the right of Israel to exist within secure and internationally recognized borders. We appeal to the parties to abandon rigid positions that do nothing to help place dialogue above violence and to refrain from taking unilateral steps that might affect the course of the dialogue and/or prejudice the final outcome of the talks.

Chile values and supports the efforts being made by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, to persuade the parties to end the violence and return to the negotiating table. It also appreciates the contributions being made to that end by other international actors who have proposed new and interesting ideas for consideration — such as that put forward by the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia — and urges them to continue to assist the parties.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of Ukraine. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine): Ukraine is seriously concerned over the extremely dangerous situation in the Middle East, which has been steadily deteriorating since September 2000. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has now reached its most critical point, and risks sliding into full-fledged war.

Ukraine strongly condemns the continued violence, including terrorism, which almost every day produces numerous additional victims and increasingly aggravates the situation in the entire region. I would like to add my voice to those of delegations that have expressed their condolences to the families of all killed and wounded Palestinians and Israelis.

Hundreds of dead and thousands of wounded on both sides, considerable damage to the infrastructure, and a dire economic situation and living conditions among the population in the occupied Palestinian territories — those are the consequences of the 17-month-long confrontation. Obviously, the path of violence is not bringing the parties closer to the achievement of their goals and contradicts the true interests and aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians.

Ukraine is convinced that there is no alternative for both Palestinians and Israelis but to go back to the negotiating table. It is really regrettable that the favourable opportunity that existed after the speech by Chairman Arafat on 16 December last year, which was followed by three weeks that witnessed a major decline in violence, was not utilized to move forward with the political dialogue.

The current dangerous situation requires that Israel and the Palestinian Authority take a number of steps to restore calm and resume dialogue. We call on

the Palestinian leadership to take urgent and decisive action to prevent terrorist acts, cease the violence and stop the activities of terrorist networks. At the same time, Ukraine condemns the excessive use of force and the reoccupation of Palestinian-controlled territories. It is our firm conviction that the practice of extrajudicial killings, devastating raids into Palestinian-controlled territory and attacks on heavily populated areas must stop immediately. Any Israeli settlement activities on Palestinian territories, as well as closures and economic sanctions against the Palestinians, should also be terminated.

We strongly believe that the Palestinian Authority and its elected Chairman, Yasser Arafat, are legitimate partners for Israel to resume negotiations with in order to stop the violence and build peace. Any attempts to weaken them could only undermine the prospects for peace.

We noted the recent decision of the Israeli Security Cabinet to lift the blockade on the headquarters of Yasser Arafat. That is a positive step in the right direction. However, we believe that all the restrictions on the freedom of movement of the Chairman of the Palestinian Authority should be lifted.

Today as never before, the parties should recommit themselves to the renewal of the peace process based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace, as well as other principles laid down at the Madrid Conference and in the Oslo Agreements. Lasting peace can be achieved only through the establishment of a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian State and through ending the occupation of Palestinian territories. On the other hand, it is also true that lasting peace can be achieved only through the reaffirmation and full recognition of the irrevocable right of Israel to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders.

Ukraine continues to believe that full implementation of the Mitchell recommendations and Tenet understandings could bring the violence to an end, restore mutual trust and confidence and create the necessary conditions for the resumption of the Israeli-Palestinian negotiating process.

It goes without saying that the primary objective for the parties should be to stop the violence and to prevent attacks against civilians. However, it is becoming increasingly obvious that the security issues cannot be effectively addressed if they alone are tackled. We do agree with the Secretary-General that:

> "Unless both parties have a political horizon on which their hopes for peace and an improved livelihood can be based, there will be no enduring ceasefire." (*S/PV.4474, p. 13*)

In that regard we are encouraged by a number of new initiatives and ideas — which include the political perspective — that have recently been put forward from various quarters. We see merit in proposals coming from the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and from European countries, as well as in the so-called Peres-Abu'Alaa peace plan. Those proposals might bring about new prospects for peace, and should therefore be carefully considered by the parties and the international community.

One of the major obstacles to peace in the Middle East is the intensifying mutual distrust and total lack of confidence between both the leadership and the peoples of the two nations. Ukraine believes that the chances for success of the peace process and for a final settlement of the conflict will be significantly strengthened by launching a wide process aimed at developing confidence between Israelis and Palestinians, engaging the intellectual, religious, scientific, public, social, economic and other sectors of their civil societies. My country is ready to assist the parties in that regard.

The gravity of the present situation in the Middle East requires more decisive engagement by the international community, a more active role by the Security Council, and renewed diplomatic efforts by the co-sponsors of the peace process and by all other international actors in order to assist the two parties to stop the violence and to restore the peace dialogue. We welcome the activities of the representatives of the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations Special Coordinator — the so-called "Quartet" — and call on them to intensify their efforts. We also consider the personal involvement of the Secretary-General in the process of finding a settlement to the Middle East question to be a critically important factor. We support his mediation activities and encourage him to continue them.

Finally, the Security Council cannot remain silent, and should give an adequate and prompt response to the extremely dangerous situation in the

region. We expect that the Council will be in a position to take an effective decision in that regard shortly.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of India. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Sharma (India): Mr. President, allow me to congratulate you on assuming the presidency of the Security Council. We would also like to congratulate Ambassador Jagdish Koonjul of Mauritius for his successful stewardship of the Council last month.

We associate ourselves with the statement made by South Africa on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. As we are deeply concerned at the recent developments, we thought it necessary also to share our sentiments with the Security Council.

The tragic cycle of violence that has engulfed the Middle East region since September 2000 has been very damaging to peace and stability. It is a source of deep concern to all. This violence has led to the most tragic loss of hundreds of lives and grievous injuries to thousands. It has derailed the Middle East peace process and severely dented trust and confidence between the parties, without which there cannot be forward movement on negotiated agreements about interim and final status issues. The longer the violence continues, the greater the danger that extremist and radical tendencies will be strengthened to the detriment of prospects for a peaceful resolution. That is why it is essential to exercise the utmost restraint, to eschew violence and to shun all kinds of acts that could destabilize the peace process.

The unfortunate situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, exacerbated by the incidents of provocation and excessive use of force, underlines the urgent need to restore calm and peace there. India has consistently stood by the Palestinian people. It has actively supported peace initiatives in the Middle East. India is committed to a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region, based on United Nations Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace. We support the inalienable and legitimate right of the Palestinian people to a homeland. We recognize the right of all States of the region, including Israel and Palestine, to exist peacefully within secure and internationally recognized boundaries.

An important issue that has vitiated the atmosphere has been the establishment and expansion of Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory. The rapid growth and expansion of settlements and the establishment of new ones since the signing of the Oslo Accords and the establishment of the Palestinian Authority undermine mutual confidence as well as the credibility of the peace process. We trust that Israel will respect the overwhelming sentiment of the international community for a freeze on all settlement activity.

We remain convinced that, under the leadership of President Arafat, the national aspirations of the Palestinian people, for which they have waged a long struggle, can be realized. We remain vitally interested in peace, development and stability in the region and are ready to assist in whatever way we can.

We believe that the Mitchell report and the Tenet plan are means to enable the transition from the current situation to the negotiating table, where the modalities of ending the Israeli occupation and final status issues must be resolved.

Violence and terrorism have to be abjured; there can be no justification for such acts. We believe that, given will and determination, and a commitment to settle disputes peacefully, no odds are insurmountable, no goals too far. Ultimately it is the parties themselves that have to shoulder the major responsibility for achieving a permanent and lasting solution. A spirit of accommodation and political will must imbue the negotiation process. The parties must harness all their energies to achieve a just and comprehensive peace in their vital mutual interest.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Fadaifard (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me first congratulate you on the assumption of the presidency of the Council for the month of February and express my full confidence in your leadership and ability to steer the work of the Council. I should also commend the Ambassador of Mauritius for the able and effective manner in which he conducted the work of the Council last month.

Once again the ongoing Israeli repression of the Palestinians has warranted another open debate — and

possibly an action — by the Security Council. Excessive and disproportionate measures adopted by the Israeli Army, in full disregard for any established principles of international law and humane standards, continue to take a heavy toll on Palestinian civilians. Israel's resort to state-of-the art weapons, such as F-16 warplanes, Apache helicopter gunships and heavy tanks, to target Palestinian installations and invade civilian areas in the occupied territories, have outraged the international community in general and the Islamic world in particular. Suffocating closures and the siege imposed on Palestinian people and officials are further worsening the situation.

The continuation of targeted assassinations and the bulldozing of civilians' homes by Israel brought an end to a few weeks of relative calm in December and January and have once again demonstrated that Israeli repressive acts lie at the origin of each new cycle of violence. Such acts have frustrated efforts made by Western envoys and have also pushed back some positive initiatives taken by some Western countries that could provide new opportunities for addressing the flagrant injustice the Palestinian people have faced for decades.

At the same time, it is unfortunate that Israel, through a massive disinformation campaign, which includes resorting to levelling accusations against other States, aims at exacerbating the tension in the region in an attempt to cover up its campaign of aggression against the Palestinian people and undermine the support of international public opinion for them.

Occupation lies at the very origin of the Palestinian conflict and overall tension and instability in the Middle East. The uprising of the Palestinian people constitutes a legitimate response to the occupation and aims at achieving their right of self-determination in their own homeland. The shocking developments over the past few months have brought closer into view the fact that, unless the principal cause of conflict is effectively addressed, the crisis will never subside.

Undoubtedly, repressive acts by Israel are prone to further exacerbate the Middle East crisis unless the international community and the United Nations intervene immediately to stop the brutal campaign against civilians carried out by Israeli armed forces.

We fully concur with the Secretary-General, who, in his latest speech in the Council, alerted the international community to the possibility of the region's nearing the edge of the abyss. We further concur with him that security cannot be dealt with in isolation and that it has to be addressed alongside key political issues, particularly the question of land, and economic and social issues, including the increasingly critical and desperate conditions of the Palestinians.

We believe that the international community should stand by the Palestinians and lend support to the establishment of a viable, sovereign Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. A complete end to foreign occupation and the full restoration of all of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, including their right to self-determination and to return to their homeland, should be the main pillars of any solution.

There is no doubt that the Security Council is expected to act appropriately, with a view to putting an end to the violations by the occupying Power and to paving the way for bringing those responsible to justice. Regrettably, the exercise and the threat of exercise of the veto have so far prevented the Council from discharging its constitutional responsibility with respect to so crucial an issue, to the profound disappointment of the international community. Undoubtedly, the inaction of the Security Council is emboldening Israel to defy the wishes of the international community, which are reflected, inter alia, in numerous General Assembly resolutions.

The lingering violence in the occupied territories has further demonstrated the need for an international protection force to be established by the Council, with a view to protecting defenceless Palestinian civilians. The resort to the veto last year to discard draft resolutions intended to authorize the establishment of such a force proved a disservice, as can be seen from the worsening situation in the area. The presence of such a force on the ground could have forestalled more violence and more bloodshed and saved many precious lives.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the kind words he addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Japan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Yoshikawa (Japan): The Government of Japan is deeply concerned at the fact that the vicious circle of violence that has been raging in the Middle East for more than a year has recently intensified, with large numbers of casualties on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides.

The Government of Japan once again urges the Palestinian Authority, led by Chairman Arafat, to make the utmost effort to suppress extremists. It also urges the Government of Israel to refrain from actions such as attacks against facilities of the Palestinian Authority, which do not contribute to calming the situation, and to make constructive efforts, including a genuine dialogue with the Palestinian Authority.

As Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated before the Council last week, it is imperative for the international community to work with the parties in a concerted manner towards a peaceful settlement of this conflict. He also stressed the importance of addressing security, political, economic and social issues together. Japan has called for both parties to return to the negotiating table, in the spirit of the Oslo Accords as well as the Mitchell recommendations and the Tenet understandings. Recently, the Secretaries-General of the three ruling coalition parties of Japan met with the leaders of the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, conveying letters to them from Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, and urged both parties to resume negotiations.

The Government of Japan also expresses once again its appreciation for the active efforts being made by the United States of America and European and Arab countries, as well as the United Nations, towards a peaceful settlement of the conflict. In this connection, we welcome the fact that initiatives have recently been proposed from several quarters, in particular by Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia. This is indeed an indication of the international community's strong desire for the resolution of the conflict.

In addition to its efforts aimed at the settlement of the conflict, the international community has an important responsibility to alleviate the economic and social difficulties confronting the Palestinians as a result of the present grave situation on the ground. Since 1993, the Government of Japan has provided economic assistance to the Palestinians amounting to more than $600 million. Since September 2000, it has provided approximately $50 million in emergency assistance to alleviate the serious economic hardships of the Palestinian people. In this connection, I regret that facilities and equipment provided by international donors, including Japan, were damaged in the Israeli attacks against facilities of the Palestinian Authority.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on 11 September last, there is a new momentum for cooperation among the international community which transcends religious, racial and cultural differences. On the question of peace in the Middle East, it is important that both parties seize this opportunity to redouble their efforts to move forward, with a view to the attainment of a durable peace in the region, based on a spirit of conciliation and cooperation. The Government of Japan, for its part, is determined to do its utmost to support such efforts by the two parties.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The next speaker on my list is the representative of Iraq. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Aldouri (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Mr. President, allow me to extend to you our thanks for presiding over the work of the Council. I wish you every success in your work.

I should like also to express our gratitude to you for having convened this meeting, in order to consider the very dangerous situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. Indeed, the Zionist entity, in its military actions and acts of aggression, has exceeded all limits. Its acts should be described as terrorism, with all that implies in terms of great loss of human life and of property. Everyone is fully aware of these acts, which cannot be compared with acts of general terrorism perpetrated by individuals.

Once more the Security Council is undergoing a test with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security: its credibility and effectiveness are being put to the test, along with those of its member States. Here, I would recall that as of 15 February 2002 the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine has sent 97 messages to the Security Council calling on it to intervene and to put a stop to Zionist terrorism and massacres in Palestine. But, unfortunately, the Council has been unable to take action to put an end to the tragedy. This, we believe regretfully, will continue because of United States hegemony. That State provides military, political and media cover for the

crimes perpetrated by the Zionist entity against the people of Palestine.

International relations are now going through a very difficult and complex negative phase because of the negative concept of force and the effects of that concept on law, and because of flagrant disrespect for international law on the part of certain permanent members of the Security Council. This results in a departure from the laws of justice and equity when the Council considers a situation. The international legal underpinning of human civilization is threatened with destruction; there is a trend towards rapidly enshrining the law of the jungle.

We have noted a number of negative phenomena that have always been part of the international legal system represented by the Security Council. Let me describe the most flagrant of these. The international system has been dominated by a policy of force and opportunism, in spite of the checks and balances and the joint responsibility set out in the Charter and in international law. The second is the political double standard that is applied and pursued as a matter of policy. The third is the undermining of the stability of international law and the introduction of aberrant and alien interpretations of international rules and laws to further the policies of certain influential States members of the Security Council. The result is a set of dangerous realities that have a negative affect on international relations in general and that, because of recent world developments, have created dangerous, impossible situations.

This leads, first of all, to erroneous interpretations that are not based on any legal concept of self-defence as set out in the Charter and that do not accord with the interpretations of the International Court of Justice or with the conditions under which States, individually or collectively, may have recourse to that concept in order to defend themselves. The principle of self-defence is a noble one; it is one of the vital foundations of international law. But it has been made into a political tool to justify acts of aggression, which is insolently used by the Zionist entity every day in the face of the world community: it claims self-defence as it seeks to bring down the Palestinian people through killing, starvation and siege. Thus it destroys legal principles that are the basis of the Charter and other stable principles of international law.

Secondly, we see flagrant violations of international humanitarian law and the principles of human rights, along with military actions and occupation. That was mentioned by the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, in his statement to the Council on 18 January 2002, and was reaffirmed by Ms. Mary Robinson, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in a 19 February 2002 statement to the Counter-Terrorism Committee. The Zionist entity's daily practices in the occupied Arab territories and its acts of aggression against the Palestinian people are a flagrant violation of all four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and pose a dangerous threat to the very foundations of international law and the principles of human rights.

Thirdly, it leads to a distortion of the right of peoples to self-determination and of their inalienable right to resist occupation and to defend themselves, their territorial integrity and the integrity of their people, as set out in the Charter and reaffirmed by many Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and by the International Court of Justice. That premeditated, intentional distortion of these rights is being carried out with help from the vast power that a major Power holds over information; that Power places all its resources at the service of the Zionist entity, dangerously distorting the distinction between the victim and the aggressor. The crimes perpetrated by the Zionist entity's forces of occupation against unarmed Palestinians go beyond the cruellest crimes in the history of colonialism, including the use of sophisticated warplanes against Palestinian civilians in their homes, towns and villages. Since the beginning of the occupation in 1948, the sadism and brutality of the Zionist occupation have caused the deportation of 68 per cent of the Palestinian people: 4.5 million Palestinian refugees are waiting to return to their homeland. The Zionists have also uprooted more than 150,000 olive trees. The millions of Palestinians who remain in Palestine are in places where children and pregnant women are killed every day and where gravely ill civilians perish daily because of the many checkpoints and the inhuman conditions they must constantly endure.

The cities and towns of Palestine have become a huge prison in which the Palestinian people are confined. As with the apartheid system in South Africa, this is State aggression and State terrorism. When the Palestinian people attempt to resist this occupation and

terrorism and to claim their inalienable rights and their land, they are forced to pay the price: the United States and the Zionist entity claim that their acts are terrorist acts. Can there be any more flagrant attempt to portray the victim as an aggressor? Most people throughout the world would reject this. These practices cannot be used as a pretext for violating stable international laws, which grant peoples the right to self-determination and the right to resist occupation. In the final analysis, one cannot solve problems by military means, by weapons, bombs and missiles, but by applying the rules and norms of international law.

In conclusion, today world Governments and States, the United Nations Organization and the Security Council must adopt a position defending the rights of the Palestinian people: the right to recover all their land, the right of return of refugees and the right to the return of all other occupied Arab territories. Now and in the future, the Security Council must fully assume its responsibilities and take the proper measures in accordance with the Charter and the foundations of international law in order to put an end to this terrorism and to compel the occupying force to fully comply with international humanitarian law. It must do so immediately, taking measures to protect the Palestinian people. Otherwise, everyone will, without exception, bear the historic responsibility for the deterioration of the international legal system, and the ship that carries us all will simply sink.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Iraq for his kind words addressed to me.

I now call on the representative of Argentina. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Cappagli (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Sir, for the timely holding of this open meeting. We congratulate you on presiding over this meeting, and we extend our appreciation to the Permanent Representative of Mauritius for his stewardship during the month of January.

Argentina, in line with its commitment to maintaining international peace and security, is closely following the situation in the Middle East, which is extremely grave and deteriorates day by day. The tragic dimensions of the situation should not, however, cause us to abandon the necessary quest for a negotiated settlement to the conflict and for the protection of the lives and rights of the civilian population. Every possible effort must be made to ensure that the parties regain mutual confidence and return to the negotiating table in line with path traced by the Mitchell recommendations and the Tenet plan.

It is our view that the security issues are extremely important. However, it does seem to us that they cannot be resolved in isolation but must be placed within a broader context so that we can simultaneously and comprehensively address the underlying political questions. We particularly appreciate the recent statement by the Secretary-General, and we share his concerns.

We believe that urgent action is necessary and of great priority in order to put an end to violence and the disproportionate use of force. The parties, together with the international community, should extensively and flexibly study ideas and proposals that would get the peace process back on track. In this regard, the proposal of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, as has been mentioned by a large part of the international community, offers fresh hope for peace and must be examined by both parties in a constructive, forward-looking manner.

Argentina maintains its traditional support for the process established by resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Madrid Conference, the Oslo Accords and the other agreements and understandings between the parties. Argentina wishes to reaffirm its support for a stable and lasting peace in the Middle East, based on the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination and to an independent and viable State, as well as for Israel's right to live in peace with its neighbours within secure and internationally recognized borders. In this context, we add our voice to the international community's exhortation to maintain the role properly belonging to the President of the Palestinian Authority, Yasser Arafat, as the legitimate interlocutor for his people.

Until mutual confidence has been restored between the parties, the international community and the Security Council must act in concert to find a solution to the conflict and to help the parties resume the path of dialogue. The United Nations has a historical responsibility towards Palestine and a central role in the urgent efforts to assist the Middle East peace process.

We urge the parties once again to return to the negotiating table, encouraged by a political readiness for compromise and reciprocal concessions, since the path of peace is the only option for all people living in the region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Argentina for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Turkey. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Pamir (Turkey): Allow me at the outset to present to you, Sir, our congratulations on assuming the presidency of the Council. We wish you every success.

Turkey has already aligned itself, yesterday, with the statement delivered by the Permanent Representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union. It was a skilfully crafted text reflecting our main concerns with regard to the situation in the Middle East. This being so, we deem it worthwhile to bring forth the following at this gathering of the Security Council.

It was not long ago that we met in this Chamber, condemned violence and terrorism in the strongest possible terms and warned the Israeli and the Palestinian parties about the then looming threat of an escalation of confrontation.

It is with great regret, therefore, that we note today the sheer lack of any advance in warding off this trend. Rather, the grim realities on the ground confirm the frightening picture the Secretary-General brought to the fore during a recent Council meeting, on 21 February. We add our voice to the Secretary-General's call and urge the parties to do everything in their power to get off this hook of spiralling violence, move away from confrontation and return to the negotiating table.

It is evident that this dynamic of violence and retaliation must stop, lest we run the risk of a full-fledged war. We believe it is incumbent upon the leaders of both parties to exercise maximum restraint right now. And it is incumbent upon us, the international community, to spare no effort in helping the parties to overcome this vicious circle, which leads nowhere other than to treacherous grounds.

Turkey, for its part, continues to encourage all new and constructive ideas which have a fair and realistic chance of application. We also believe that the recommendations of the Mitchell report and the Tenet understandings embody the right political instruments and are still the right vision. Through them, peace can be achieved on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace.

Let me highlight here that both parties have agreed on the intrinsic even-handedness of the report and the understandings, though they have yet to implement them. After all, the only way to peace and security is through meaningful dialogue. There cannot be a military solution to this problem.

The main responsibility lies with the parties themselves. We call on them to take the long view, to see that there is a brighter future befitting the long and honourable history of both nations. The future is not the one depicted in a photograph on the front page of yesterday's *New York Times*: Palestinian fathers handing Kalashnikov rifles to their four-year-old sons cannot herald a future that we want to head for, and this image should not be allowed to reign over the imaginations of new and coming generations. There is, and always will be, a much better way.

A while ago, I stressed the importance of statesmanship and restraint. In this regard, it is a welcome development that the Palestinian leadership has arrested the suspected criminals in the assassination of the Israeli Minister of Tourism, Mr. Rehavam Ze'evi. We hope that justice will be brought to bear on the perpetrators of this heinous crime. Such concrete steps should also be taken against the perpetrators of other terrorist crimes against the Israeli people. The security officials of both parties should cooperate in earnest with a view to avoiding renewed terrorist acts.

The decision on the part of the Israeli Government to withdraw its tanks from Chairman Arafat's compound is welcome, yet it needs to do more. Turkey has always believed that putting restrictions on Mr. Arafat, thus lessening his room to manoeuvre and thereby hampering his propensity for action, is counterproductive. Therefore, we believe that such restrictions must be lifted, as Chairman Arafat is the legitimate leader of the Palestinians and the only interlocutor.

The establishment of a just and viable peace in the Middle East remains the shared goal of the

international community. Turkey, for its part, has always been a vocal and energetic supporter of the peace process and will continue to act as a facilitator. We welcome the efforts of the United Nations, the "Quartet" and others. This having been said, we consider greater American involvement to be key in putting the process back on track and restoring the brighter prospects that we have lost along the way.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Turkey for his kind words.

I now give the floor to the representative of Saudi Arabia, whom I invite to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Shobokshi (Saudi Arabia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to associate myself with those who preceded me in congratulating you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of the Security Council for this month. We are convinced that, by virtue of your wisdom, competence and skill, you will be able to lead the work of the Council to success. We would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Mauritius for having led the work of the Security Council so skilfully during the last month.

No one in the world today can deny that what the Palestinian people are enduring in the occupied territories is one of the worst forms of injustice, racial persecution, occupation and systematic terrorism in the history of mankind. The Palestinians are subjected to injustice, oppression and domination in the view of the entire world, and Israel flouts all resolutions of international legitimacy and defies the most fundamental human rights. Despite all the international resolutions that have been adopted against Israel, none of them has been implemented and Israel has not been compelled to comply with any of them.

Israel claims that it seeks peace and aspires to good-neighbourliness on the basis of security, and that the Palestinians do not seek peace and are endangering its citizens. However, it is the Arabs who seek peace and good-neighbourly relations and are the ones who made peace a strategic option. Therefore, the initiative of the Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister was welcomed and supported throughout the world. The world was convinced that the demands of the Arabs include reclaiming their lands in the Palestinian occupied territories, the Golan Heights and Shebaa' Farms in Lebanon, in accordance with international resolutions, as well as regaining the legitimate Palestinian rights and putting an end to the Israeli occupation. Israel created new pretexts regarding its security, and it has brandished those pretexts in the face of all those seeking peace, thus trying to obstruct any attempt to implement the resolutions of the United Nations.

This has been Israel's policy. Even the application of international legality is subjected to Israel's own concepts of security. No one denies that every State has a right to ensure the security of its people, but what security is Israel speaking of? Is it an exclusive right of Israel that excludes all other peoples in the region? Is it to be carried out in the absence of peace while occupation continues? Israel deprives Arabs of their rights and water, expands its settlements, seeks to dominate others, imposes a blockade on Palestinians and prevents them from working, all for security reasons? Can Israel demolish houses, destroy fields and crops and carry out a policy of displacement and forcible expulsions, all for security reasons?

In view of these facts, we ask: where is security for Palestinians? Every Palestinian should have security. As Palestinians have suffered from the inhuman practices to which they are subjected every day, the pretext of Israel's security is total disregard of the security needs of Palestinians and Arabs.

Israel has no desire for peace and no desire to settle the Middle East problem or to comply with international resolutions, and thus it drags the international community into a vicious circle of security considerations to prevent it from considering the very essence of the Middle East problem, which lies in the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands. To continue its occupation and oppression of those lands, Israel has prevented the recognition of the legitimate right of the Palestinian people and obstructed the Security Council. Israel is aware of all of this, and the international community knows that Israel is seeking to promote its security at the expense of preventing any attempt to examine the occupation.

Israel's oppression of Palestinians and its repeated statements regarding Palestinian violence should lead us to ask what causes have led to that violence, which are Israel's unwillingness to seek peace and its desire to circumvent the peace process. It is seeking to avoid any withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories and Jerusalem and to expand its presence in the occupied territories and beyond.

What can justify this violence? The Palestinian violence is merely a response to Israeli terrorism and the ongoing occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands. It is an expression of bitterness and frustration at many years of waiting and expectation, which has made Palestinians lose hope for a peaceful solution in the face of Israel's stonewalling, reneging on its commitments, and acts of repression, reprisal and collective punishment, in flagrant defiance of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the principle of land for peace and the many agreements and accords it has concluded in this regard.

Israel's objective has been and remains to expel the Arab people from Palestine and to occupy even more Palestinian territory in order to establish an exclusive State. That objective is the real foundation of Israel's current policy and of all its programmes against the Palestinian people, subjected to hateful occupation. Israel's assassination of Palestinians is aimed at eliminating an entire people motivated by the desire to survive and to regain its rights. It is no coincidence that Israeli forces are seeking to dam the sources of the Palestinian people's resistance. They take Palestinian women and children in an effort to prevent the creation of new militants and, by precluding the emergence of a new generation, to make Palestinians believe that they have no future.

The current Israeli Government does not hesitate to use any form of violence, which it justifies under pretexts of legality. In this case, Israel cannot arrogate to itself a legitimate right by monopolizing the violence. Palestinian violence is a response to Israeli violence and is recognized as resistance to occupation under international law.

The events of the last 18 months have proven that Israel's hope that military force can thwart Arab claims is misplaced. History shows that no Power, whatever its might, can dominate forever. Israel's domination today contravenes the principles of the United Nations Charter and international law. All peoples must enjoy their rights and history confirms that no community, whatever its military might, can monopolize peace, security and sovereignty over other territories or usurp the rights of others.

We cannot allow the current situation to continue. If it does, the frustration and anger will only increase and give rise to further violence and extremist actions on both sides, making it impossible to obtain the final objective of peace. The situation is explosive. Israel's military terrorism and the reaction of the Palestinian people have claimed numerous victims. Both parties clearly need external assistance to break the cycle of violence and to prevent this volatile situation from deteriorating further. If we fail to bring the parties back to the negotiating table, the situation may well spiral out of control.

We fully agree with the statement of the Secretary-General to the effect that the situation in the region is extremely serious, that bitterness and mutual distrust are being exacerbated every day and that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could deteriorate into total war. We are truly at the edge of the abyss. We agree that the fundamental problem lies in the Israeli occupation, which has led to an escalation of violence and terrorism in the region and to terrible economic deprivation and suffering. All these problems are related to attempts to identify the issue merely as one of security. A solution defined on that basis cannot succeed. Security cannot be sought independently of other issues. It must be addressed side by side with other basic political issues. If it is not, we will see a renewed and even worse exchange of violence.

The deterioration of the situation in the Palestinian occupied territories is fraught with serious consequences of international scope. The situation requires international efforts to restore peace and security in the area to be stepped up. The parties must settle the conflict through the rigorous implementation of Security Council resolutions, in particular resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). The total withdrawal of the Israeli forces of occupation from the territories occupied in 1967 will ensure security and stability and allow the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination and to create its own State, with Jerusalem as its capital. A withdrawal from the Sheba'a farmlands and the Syrian Golan Heights will reinforce good-neighbourliness, security and stability.

The international community has an important responsibility towards the Palestinian people as it seeks to exercise its legitimate rights and a political responsibility with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security, especially in the Middle East, and to the implementation of resolutions of international legality.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Saudi Arabia for his kind words addressed to me.

The next speaker on my list is the representative of Yemen. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Al-Ashtal (Yemen) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like, on behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Yemen, to express our pleasure at seeing you, Sir, preside over the Council. We are confident that your country's membership on the Council will contribute to the success of its work and add to the record of your friendly country, which has always held clear positions in support of peace and justice. I also wish to congratulate the new members, which represent a positive addition to the Council's work.

I also offer our thanks and appreciation for your prompt convening of this emergency meeting of the Council to consider the deteriorating situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, which requires urgent action from the Council. We also express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his statement to the Council, which contained important elements and ideas that may be built upon in taking urgent steps to calm the situation and to ensure the resumption of negotiations.

In his statement, the Secretary-General expressed his firm conviction that the key interrelated problems remain occupation, security, deprivation and economic suffering. He also stated that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict could never be solved militarily or on the basis of security alone, and that the question of security could not be dealt with in isolation from the other key political issues, especially those of land, other economic and social matters and the dire living conditions of the Palestinian people. The Secretary-General's message to the Security Council was clear: failure to address all these issues would lead to more devastation and violence. It is for that reason that the Security Council should work together intensively with the other parties to achieve a comprehensive and just peace in the Middle East.

The Israeli Government's recent statement that it would establish buffer zones in the occupied territories is a continuation of the war against the Palestinian people, their leadership and the peace process itself. Once again, we agree with what the Secretary-General said, that security measures and military solutions will never bring security for Israel.

The continuation of the bloody military campaign by the Israeli Government under the leadership of Ariel Sharon against the Palestinian people and the Palestinian Authority has led to more Palestinian civilians being made victims or becoming injured and to massive destruction of Palestinian institutions and infrastructure and official buildings of the Authority, including the headquarters of the Chairman of the Authority. Israeli occupation forces are continuing their inhumane blockade and their unjust restrictions on movement between the villages and towns of Palestine, thereby preventing the Palestinian people from moving about freely on a daily basis.

The Government of Israel, the occupying Power, should shoulder its full responsibility for its violations of human rights and the crimes and acts of terrorism it commits against the Palestinian people in flagrant violation of international human rights laws and resolutions of international legitimacy. In its most recent campaign, Israel used F-16 fighter jets, Apache helicopters, seacraft and tanks against residential areas and the facilities of the Palestinian Authority. The Israeli authorities even opened fire on medical crews trying to save injured persons. In its recent acts, it has also aimed at subjugating the Palestinian people and at undermining the Palestinian National Authority, depriving it of its inalienable national rights guaranteed by international law and norms and relevant United Nations resolutions.

We have called on the Security Council many times to shoulder its responsibilities with regard to maintaining international peace and security, to quickly intervene to protect Palestinian civilians against Israeli attacks and acts of aggression, and to stop the bloodshed. Regrettably, the Council has not played its role or shouldered its responsibilities. Once again, we have come to the Security Council in the wake of great deterioration in the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem. It has become extremely dangerous in recent days. It is now imperative that the Council intervene immediately and positively to address this dangerous situation and to stop the bloodshed.

The latest events have proven that the continuation of Israel's occupation is the cause of the explosion in the situation in the region, for there is no

military solution to the situation in the occupied territories. The Israeli Government's continuing military campaign will never bring about security for its people. The solution is to be found through negotiations on the bases agreed upon and through the implementation of the agreements concluded between the two parties. It is for that reason that the Security Council should shoulder its responsibilities under the Charter by adopting a resolution to send international forces or observers or to take any other steps it deems necessary to immediately provide protection to the Palestinian people.

What we are hoping for is a comprehensive and just peace that will provide security in the region, a peace that makes it possible for the Palestinians to realize all their rights. Those rights include the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. We also call on the sponsors of the peace process — the United States of America, the Russian Federation and the European Union — to do everything possible to put an end to the serious deterioration in the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories, to end the violence, lift the blockade imposed on the territories, end Israeli aggression, provide international protection to the Palestinian people, and end Israel's occupation of all Arab and Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.

In conclusion, we expect a clear message from the Council. We also expect a new vision to be translated into a resolution acceptable to all members of the Council, especially to the permanent members. Failure to adopt such a resolution at this historic juncture in the region will lead to disappointment and serve to push the situation into an unimaginable state of deterioration.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank the representative of Yemen for his kind words addressed to me.

The last speaker inscribed on my list is the representative of the Sudan. I invite him to take a seat at the Council table and to make his statement.

Mr. Manis (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Mr. President, my sincere congratulations on the important achievements of the Security Council during your presidency. I also wish to thank you for having convened this very important meeting to consider current developments in Palestine. I must also extend my thanks to the delegation of Mauritius for its very excellent conduct of the work of the Council last month.

In this regard, Sudan would like to pay tribute to Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the statement he made in the Council last Thursday. We would also like to hail his efforts to contain the deteriorating situation in the region.

The situation in the Palestinian occupied territories is so dangerous that the Security Council must assume its responsibility for safeguarding international peace and security. It must act quickly to halt the ominous deterioration of the situation, which might push the entire region into a global conflagration, due to the use of excessive military force by the occupying Israeli forces against innocent Palestinian civilians and the isolation of villages and towns in Palestine, as well as the destruction of all institutions of the Palestinian Authority. In an alarming development, this blockade has included the very symbol of the Palestinian cause, President Yasser Arafat, the legitimate leader of the Palestinian people. This measure is totally unacceptable, and it must be condemned by the international community.

The Security Council must act quickly to end the Israeli Prime Minister's criminal plans aimed at creating buffer zones around the cities and towns of Palestine and at constructing a wall to separate East Jerusalem from West Jerusalem in a serious attempt to create total isolation of and between the Palestinians.

The Secretary-General affirmed in his statement to the Council that there were no security measures or military solutions to the Palestinian problem, and he reaffirmed what many delegations have already repeated on many occasions to the Council, that Israel must understand that violence cannot guarantee the security it desires, because such security cannot be attained as long as Israel continues its expansionist policies, its acts of violence, repression and aggression.

The only way to bring about peace in the Middle East is to put an end to Israeli occupation in the Palestinian occupied territories and the Arab occupied territories — the Golan Heights and Shebaa' Farms in Lebanon. Israel must show its total commitment to the resolutions of international legitimacy and the Security Council, particularly 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and allow the Palestinian people to establish their own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital, as well as respect the terms of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

In conclusion, we hope that the Council will endeavour to use the present momentum to take rapid measures and assume its fundamental role in ensuring international peace and security, that it will work promptly to halt Israeli aggression against the citizens of Palestine and that it will impose respect for Security Council resolutions regarding the Palestinian cause.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The Security Council will remain seized of the matter.

The meeting rose at 8.05 p.m.